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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 330th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 21 January 2011, at 11 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Ban Ki-moon ..... (Secretary-General)
Chairman: Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.183/2011/L.1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chairman** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Daou** (Mali) nominated Mr. Diallo (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) and Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) for re-election to the two offices of Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Borg (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. **Ms. Rafti** (Cyprus) seconded the nominations.

5. *Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) and Mr. Borg (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Diallo (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

7. **The Secretary-General** said that he was very concerned at the lack of progress towards peace between Israel and the Palestinians. He had repeatedly expressed his regret, both publicly and in one-on-one conversations with leaders, that Israel had not frozen settlement activities. Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were illegal under international law, contravened the Road Map obligations of Israel, undermined confidence, prejudged the outcome of the permanent status negotiations and hampered efforts to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. He deplored the recent demolition of the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem, expressed concern at continued house demolitions and evictions of Palestinian families in other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which heightened tensions, and once again called on Israel to freeze all settlement activities.

8. It was necessary to move beyond the current stalemate and return the parties to meaningful negotiations aimed at resolving all permanent status issues and achieving an historic agreement. The target dates supported by the Quartet for reaching an Israeli-Palestinian framework agreement on permanent status and for completion of the Palestinian Authority's two-year state-building programme were only eight months away. The Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative had important roles in that regard. He looked forward to fruitful discussions with his Quartet counterparts in Munich on 5 February 2011, as well as with the Follow-Up Committee of the League of Arab States.

9. The Palestinian people had the right to an independent and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security. Similarly, there should be no doubt about the legitimate right of Israel to exist in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders and to be fully integrated into the region, as suggested by the Arab Peace Initiative. A way needed to be found for Jerusalem to emerge as a capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all. There was no place for irresponsible rhetoric that called into question these fundamentals, sought to delegitimize the heritage of others or incited hatred and violence.

10. The past year had brought renewed confidence within the international community in the ability of the Palestinians to govern themselves. The Palestinian Authority had made major strides in strengthening its institutions and had continued to deliver improved governance, transparency, economic opportunity and security to the Palestinians in areas under its control. It deserved recognition as a dependable partner. He was encouraged by the World Bank's assessment that the Palestinian Authority was well positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future and called on donors to continue their crucial support for the Palestinian state-building plan.

11. The situation in and around Gaza continued to give cause for concern. Although the levels of overall violence had declined in 2010, the recent escalation of rocket attacks by Palestinians and Israeli air strikes had the potential to spiral out of control. The shootings of unarmed Palestinians in the vicinity of the Gaza border were also unacceptable. His representative on the ground and his colleagues were working hard to promote calm. While Israel's legitimate security concerns were not in doubt, all parties were urged to demonstrate responsibility, de-escalate tensions and fully ensure the protection of civilians. The provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) should be fully respected. The residents of Gaza and southern Israel deserved to live in an atmosphere free from fear of rocket and air attacks.

12. Gaza's civilian population deserved better living conditions. Frustration over the humanitarian situation and the lack of opportunity was especially acute among Gaza's young people. In that regard, while the Israeli measures to ease the closure were a step in the right direction, much more needed to be done to bring about full-scale reconstruction and recovery. The continuing efforts of the United Nations towards that end would hinge on continued support from donors for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

13. Regrettably, yet another year had passed without progress towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation. Efforts to move forward on that important issue needed to be pursued further. Expressing regret that Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit was still in detention, he said that he would continue to call for his release. Turning to the critical issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israel, he said that their release by Israel, as called for by the Palestinian Authority, would serve as a significant confidence-building measure.

14. He expressed the hope that the current year would see a decisive upsurge in efforts to bring an end to the conflict and 43 long years of occupation, through the creation of a State of Palestine living side by side with Israel in peace and security, and through the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region that was consistent with Security Council resolutions, previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee could make a positive contribution to that mission. For his part, he would continue to pursue a just and lasting peace using all the means available to him.

Statement by the Chairman

15. **The Chairman**, speaking as the representative of Senegal, said that achieving peace between the Israelis and Palestinians resembled the task of Sisyphus. The Occupying Power was demolishing houses and displacing Palestinians from their homes. The Israeli Government's decision, in February 2010, to place the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi) and Rachel's Tomb (Masjid Bilal) on the Israeli national heritage list demonstrated its continued determination to erase the multiconfessional heritage of those sites sacred to all three revealed religions. The May 2010 deadly attack by the Israeli army on the Gaza-bound humanitarian flotilla, the stepped-up pace of settlement activity, and the various illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories, including violations of international humanitarian law, continued to give cause for concern. He called on the Israeli Government to lift the blockade on Gaza, freeze settlement activities in order to create the appropriate conditions for the resumption of negotiations, and choose peace, security and freedom from fear for all peoples of the region, including Israelis. Whatever the obstacles to peace might be, the Committee should not be deterred and would continue to implement its mandate until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were fully realized.

Statement by the Observer for Palestine

16. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that there was a global consensus that Israeli settlements were a major obstacle to the peace negotiations. The international community was determined that Israel should comply with its obligation to cease settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and he hoped that the Security Council would adopt a resolution to that effect. Similarly, the Quartet needed to demonstrate decisive leadership at its 5 February 2011 meeting and in the months leading to September 2011, suggested by President Obama at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly as the target date for an agreement that would lead to membership in the United Nations for an independent, sovereign state of Palestine, living in peace with Israel.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

17. **The Chairman** said that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly had given strong support to the four resolutions on the question of Palestine submitted by the Committee. The Security Council had heard briefings from Robert Serry, the United Nations special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, and Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, after the latter of which he himself had addressed the Council on behalf of the Committee.

18. On 7 December 2010, the Department of State of the United States of America had announced that the United States Government had given up its effort to persuade the Israeli Government to renew its partial moratorium on the construction of settlements, which had expired in September 2010. On 9 December 2010, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had declared that there could be no negotiations on

permanent status issues as long as Israeli settlement construction continued. The Committee, along with most of the international community, had regretted the Israeli decision not to renew the moratorium and supported President Abbas' response. In late December 2010, the Israeli Peace Now movement had reported that construction was under way in more than 50 per cent of settlements and that over $500 million had been allocated under the 2011-2012 Israeli budget to settlements.

19. The year 2010 had seen the fewest militant attacks against Israel and the lowest number of Israeli casualties in a decade. For the second year in a row, there had been no suicide bombings. On 5 January 2011 the Palestine Liberation Organization had issued a report documenting Israeli human rights violations committed in 2010, including killings, confiscations of land and property and home demolitions. On 9 January 2011, as noted by the Secretary-General, Israel had demolished the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem to build a luxury apartment complex for settlers. On 14 January 2011, Guyana had become the seventh South American nation to recognize Palestinian statehood. On 17 January 2011, the Bureau of the Committee had issued a statement expressing its alarm over the recent upsurge in Israeli settlement activity.

Draft programme of work of the Committee (A/AC.183/2011/CRP.1)

20. **The Chairman**, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 2011 (A/AC.183/2011/CRP.1), said that section I summarized the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, section II conveyed the Committee's view of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, section III outlined the priority issues for 2011, and section IV described the planned activities of the Committee and of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

21. *The draft programme of work for 2011 was adopted.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (Working Paper No. 1)

22. **The Chairman** drew attention to Working Paper No. 1, which contained applications for accreditation to the Committee submitted by four non-governmental organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Bureau had concluded that the four organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and had recommended that they should be accredited. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the applications.

23. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from Sharek Youth Forum (Occupied Palestinian Territory), Palestine Solidarity Campaign Thailand (Thailand), OneVoice Movement (United States of America), and the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution (United States of America) were approved.*

Other matters

24. **The Chairman** said that the members of the Bureau would serve as the Committee's delegation to the upcoming conference on the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons to be held in Cairo on 7 and 8 February 2011. Uruguay had agreed to host the forthcoming United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Montevideo.

25. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that, on the eve of the Cairo meeting and a number of other international conferences focusing on the plight of Palestinian political prisoners, he thought that the Committee should be aware that Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons had just begun a strike to protest against their conditions of imprisonment.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.